

## Peace, Peace-Building and Development Challenges in Nigeria

Theophilus Oyime Adejumo, PhD

Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, University of Calabar, PMB  
1115, Eta Agbor, Calabar, Nigeria

Email: [theophilusoyime@gmail.com](mailto:theophilusoyime@gmail.com)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6275-5201>

### ABSTRACT

*In Nigeria, political actors, especially those in the ruling and opposition political parties, utilize peace and peace building as a rhetorical strategy in which two or more parties in discord agreed to mend their co-existential forces, made possible by the mutual exercise of “live-and-let-live” option. The aim of this article is to contribute to existing literature on peace and conflict resolution through an investigation of the concept of peace and peace-building as a discursive political dynamic. Data for this study were secondary data. The study revealed amongst other issues, that the forceful amalgamation of the diverse ethnic nationalities into one nationhood by the British colonial imperialist is a major factor that breed conflict. The study concludes that for national peace and unity, integration, as well as socio-economic development, there is need by the Nigerian- state to sustain and maintain peace and building processes.*

**Keywords:** Peace, Peace-building, Conflicts, Instability, Development

### 1. Introduction

Peace in the word of Ikejiani-Clark and Ani (2009), is one of humanity’s highest values. Its meaning is multilateral and multi-disciplinary depending on which notion is central in the determination of peace as a concept. It derives its meaning within a cognitive framework or theory. Peace therefore, is a state of mind in concurrence with serenity: A state of harmony, tranquility, concord and a balance of equilibrium of power. Conflict on the other hand, though on unavailable part of man is the greatest threat to peace.

“Conflict is about the concrete interests adversaries pursue and at the same time, about their interpretations of what is at stake in a dispute”. “Conflict”, become intense not just because of the value of what is being fought over but because of the psychological importance of winning and losing”. Peace, is a complete absence of war, disorder or disharmony, made possible by the mutual exercise of “live-and-let-live” option. It is on this basis of this that “the existence of peace and conflict in human co-existence can be rationalize along Martin Luther King, Jr assertion (1963) that, “Life at its best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony”. This is a passionate expression of the desirability and imperativeness of peace among humans, in particular and animals in general (Iji, 2007).

The third aim of the triangle or tripod of our semantic coordinates is peace-building in which two or more parties in discord agreed to mend their co-existential fences, a temporary or permanent truce or cessation of exchange of aggression. Peace-building thus becomes a test of human maturity or civilization to come to terms with such inevitable development. Co-existential contradictions include paradoxes like squabbles, disagreement, physical violence, in form of intra or inter-ethnic or tribal, or civil wars and other forms of conflicts. Paradoxically, conflicts could enhance development as well as impede it, even though the former can only come after sustainable peace-building of the conflict that fathers it.

As a frontline state in the world, Nigeria has contribution immensely in the promotion of global governance, peace and security under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) and Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS), despite its contribution to global peace and security, Nigeria has witnessed numerous conflicts that have

inflicted monumental damage to the economy, politics and peaceful co-existence amongst groups. Theophilus et al (2023).

These conflicts, which often assume ethnic and religious forms, have led to heavy depletion of human resources, the displacement of persons, weakening of the state apparatus, increasing threats of secession amongst others. Some of these conflicts are increasingly challenging the corporate existence of Nigerians as a united body of citizens. Many individuals and groups have articulated very good explanations to these issues. However, few attempts have been made to expose in a systematic way the quest for peace and peace-building in Nigeria. This is a gap this study intends to fill.

## 2. Conceptualizing peace and peace building

The concept of peace has been variously defined by different scholars, without a consensus on how 'peace' should be accurately defined. The word is derived from the Latin word 'pax', which means a treaty, a deal or an agreement to end the war, dispute, and conflict between or among people, groups of people or nations. The *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines peace as "freedom from civil clamour and confusion". It is also "a state of public quiet." In other words, to have peace, there must be an atmosphere that is free from uproar and chaos, where there are no restrictions or obstructions to people's daily activities (Adegbami, 2020).

Ibeanu (2006), sees peace as activities geared towards reducing conflict and increasing development within specific societies and the wider international community. Thus, to guarantee social, political, and economic development there must be peace. To Ahamefule (2013), peace is a condition where there is no war; where people are not annoyed by other people; and where there is calmness; without worries or anxieties.

Peacebuilding, on the other hand, has become a daily discussed subject among social scientists, human scientists, politicians, international organizations as well as concerned global citizens. Given the mix-up surrounding the meaning of the concept of peacebuilding which made some people see it as mere crisis intervention, there is a need to properly clarify the concept to remove the misconceptions around the concept.

In the word of Brinkmann (2006) Peacebuilding means, transforming from a condition or situation of violence to more political, socio-economic equality, justice, fairness as well as security for all within cultural plurality. Brinkmann takes further steps to identify two aspects of peacebuilding. According to him, the first aspect of peacebuilding is concerned with reducing or transforming violence, while the second aspect is about improving on 'existing peaceful activities or to encourage new ones'. It should be noted, that the timing is imperative in the planning and application of peacebuilding activities, as some activities will produce positive results very quickly while others will be noticeable in the future (Brinkmann, 2006).

Boutros-Ghali (1992) sees peacebuilding as the channel through which war-affected areas or places are rebuilt. It is a process of identifying and supporting those structures which will enhance, strengthen as well as solidify peace, to avoid a reversion into conflict.

While peacebuilding is not intended or an attempt at eliminating conflict from society, it is about building an environment for negotiation, reconciliation, mutual understanding, and compromise that allows for resolving conflict issues before it degenerates into violence and conflict. In creating room for negotiation and reconciliation there is a need for peacemakers to break the truce. Peacekeeper needs to meet peace-builder, as they are inseparable partners. In his analysis, Maiese (2003) considers peacebuilding to be a process that facilitates the establishment of durable harmony by preventing the recurrence of violence. To him, peacebuilding is about peace sustenance, where every hand is on deck to keep peace and make it endure.

In a similar vein, Lederach (1997) defines peacebuilding as "a multiplicity of interdependent elements and actions that contribute to the constructive transformation of the conflict." Transformation in this context means, conversion of conflict to peace or constructively mediate in the conflict. It also means changing people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours that

will lead to transformation dynamics between individuals and groups to achieve a more stable, peaceful coexistence. In 2013, alliance for peace-building stress that, peacebuilding is the process of establishing civic order and governmental functions in countries that are emerging from a period of war or other types of upheaval. Further stresses that peacebuilding encompasses all efforts directed towards managing, mitigating, resolving, and transforming 'central aspects of conflict'. It equally involves applying diplomacy, civil society peace processes, and informal dialogues, negotiations, and mediations. These are with the view to addressing the root causes of violence to nurture reconciliation and preventing the reoccurrence of conflict.

Flowing from above, peacebuilding can be seen as methodical and rational approaches geared towards determining and removing sources of conflict, reconciling parties in conflict as well as addressing or tackling perceived issues that can trigger future conflict, Adegbami (2020).

### **3. The necessity for peace and peacebuilding in Nigeria**

This heading revives the old question that has concerned humanity for generations, the question of the essence of government. There is the assumption that there is a purpose to life and that government are relevant only if they facilitate the realization of that human purpose. Quashigha in Theophilus et al (2022). Nigeria which is supposedly the giant of Africa by virtue of its population, power and size, epitomizes the above description of African security conundrum. The return to democratic rule in 1999 dramatically charged the peace and security landscape of the country; with incidences of violent conflicts, violent extremism and terrorism stamping indelible imprints of devastations on communities and institutions of governance. Unarguably, these incidences provided a fertile ground for illicit arms to proliferate.

Interestingly, Nigeria has recorded successes in fashioning but novel ways of sustainable management its diversity, which has been argued to be fundamental to the violent conflicts recorded in the country. With the exception of the terrorist onslaughts, especially in the North-Eastern part of the country, which the government is given deserved attention, there are success stories in the resolution and containment of violent conflicts from the Niger-Delta region, to the criminalities and communal conflicts in the south-eastern and south-western regions, and to the conflicts and activities of the Fulani militants (Theophilus et al, 2021).

The above analysis, suggest that, it is not uncommon in the literature to assume no difficulty in the conceptualization of peace and peacebuilding. This however, further suggested that, the history of the modern Nigerian state has been characterised by turbulent, contentious and often violent politics. The current context is no exception. The Boko Haram conflict in the north-east is now almost a decade old, and continues to destabilise the northeast populations, to be a drain on state security forces and state finances, and to increase food insecurity. The "frozen conflict" in the Niger Delta continues its slow revival, destabilizing the lives of the Deltan populations and prompting economic instability (Theophilus et al., 2021). Repeated clashes between nomadic pastoralist (transhumant) and farming communities in the north and middle belt regions have caused increasing casualties and displacements in those areas (see-Section 9). The resurgence of Biafran secessionist claims has reinvigorated the 'National question' in popular narratives (see-Section-10). And in all of these situations, the state security forces have continued to use military responses, often violating human rights, and sometimes counterproductively leading to further escalations in violence (Theophilus et al., 2021; Hervert & Husanni, 2018).

While each of these conflicts has its own particular logic and context, analysis of the structural challenges, causes and dynamics driving these conflicts leads to the following crosscutting findings:

Socio-economic drivers of conflict, instability and resilience: At the heart of Nigeria's instability is its oil-dependent political-economy which has cultivated a national and international elite embedded in a rent-seeking system of governance. The high-stakes of this exclusive political settlement have fuelled corruption, which has delegitimised the political system and increased economic inequality. Nigeria's impressive historic macro-economic trajectory is an important

source of economic resilience, and it has led to some improvements in human development. Yet distributional injustices and exclusive growth mean that inequality, poverty and lack of access to basic services continue to drive grievances across the country and continue to hold back development for the majority. Economic disparities between the north and the rest of the country are stark (Theophilus et al, 2023).

In today's Nigeria, the economy is slowly recovering from the 2016-17 recession, which was precipitated by low oil prices, foreign exchange shortages, disruptions in oil production, power shortages, insecurity and a low capital budget execution rate (Barungi, Odhiambo & Asogwa 2017, p.2). Falling oil prices have radically undermined the financial basis of the state, which cannot recover without a rebound in oil prices. Despite Nigeria facing serious macroeconomic challenges, increased politicking in the lead up to the 2019 elections make policy reforms less likely.

**Socio-cultural drivers of conflict, instability and resilience:** In Nigeria's large and heterogeneous population, overlapping ethnic, religious, regional, and sub-ethnic (communal) identities mark the fault-lines along which political claims and violent conflicts are made. The political axis of power flips along the north-south regional divide, and overlaps with ethnic and religious divisions. These fissures are rooted in the colonial system of governance and have strengthened and hardened throughout the postcolonial period. Gender and youth have also emerged as important and active identities, yet they are often superseded by ethnic identities. Gender inequality drives and is exacerbated by Nigeria's conflicts. Theophilus (2023)

**Political drivers of conflict, instability and resilience:** Politicians who use chauvinistic appeals based on ethnicity, religion, and regionalism to shore up electoral support. Previous elections in 1999, 2003, and 2007 were characterised by sectional tensions and violence. While Nigerian political parties are legally required to have nationally representative memberships and are banned from making direct sectional appeals, in practice it is often assumed that electoral candidates will govern in favour of its co-ethnics and co-religionists. Indigeneity, one of the legal instruments designed to manage Nigeria's ethnic diversity, has instead become a source of tension and conflict. Yet other innovative governance measures such as "zoning" (when the presidential candidacy alternates between a northerner and a southerner) have been successful in alleviating some of the southern secessionist pressures that had festered under decades of military rule. Political corruption has also been a recurrent motivation for conflict as well as a key reason for the Nigerian government's frequently inadequate responses to violent outbreaks. Yet recent anticorruption efforts-led by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission-have been moderately successful and serve as an example of institutional resilience.

In today's Nigeria, power politics is now taking centre-stage ahead of the next general elections in February 2019. Key discussions ensue over whether current President Muhammadu Buhari will run in 2019, and whether a 'Third Force' is emerging in Nigeria's two-party political system to contest the 2019 elections (Eyo et al, 2022).

**Environmental drivers of conflict, instability and resilience:** Struggles over increasingly scarce land and water threaten peace and stability in many states, particularly in the north-east and north-central zones. These land and water conflicts intersect with ethnicity and indigeneity issues and have the potential to rapidly escalate. The severe food crisis in Nigeria's northeast continues in 2018, these emergency and famine conditions are largely due to the violent northeast conflict, rather than climate change or resource scarcity. While the middle-belt conflict threatens to increase food insecurity, so far it has proven resilient. Climate change is expected to exacerbate extreme weather in Nigeria, and to negatively impact food security and livelihoods, particularly in the north and southwest. Meanwhile, Nigeria's growing population is projected to make it the world's third most populous country in the world by 2050 (John et al, 2023).

## **5. Actors in peace-building in Nigeria**

Actors are those people, or group of people who have 'stake or interest', or those who are affected or concerned by a particular problem. It could also be those who can be affected by

a particular problem. Regarding peacebuilding, different sets of people or groups of people from different walks of life are the stakeholders. They include:

**5.1. Political Actors:** these are – leaders of recognized political parties, state actors (e.g. government at different levels, ministries, departments of government), the legislative bodies, and the judiciary.

**5.2. The Armed forces/Security agencies:** the security sector comprised the Military, the Police, the Air Force, the Navy, and other Para-military segments). Constitutionally, these sets of actors are saddle with the responsibility of providing adequate security for the people and their properties as well as to protect the nation against external invasion or aggression.

**5.3. Economic Entrepreneurs/Business Actors:** these are the people managing companies, multinational companies, business mogul, and traders, who are in the areas of economic and business activities in the country. These sets of people need their business to be protected and where there is no peace there cannot be any business transaction.

**5.4. Civil Society/Non-Governmental Organisation:** Civil society denotes a collection of organizations such as – community groups, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, and foundations. These groups; for the fact that their member covers an array of organizations; they are very useful and indispensable in peacebuilding activities.

**5.5. International/Regional Organisations:** these include the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, etc. who from time to time seek peace and strive that peace is maintained regionally and internationally.

**5.6. The Media Organization:** the media is referred to as the collective communication channels or apparatuses involved in storing and disseminating information especially to the people. The media include specialized communication businesses such as print media or the press, photography, advertising, cinema, broadcasting (radio and television). The media report any breakdown of peace, as well as sensitize people on the need to maintain peace and on the essentiality of peacebuilding.

**5.7. Professional Bodies:** this includes the academia, the businessmen, journalists, bankers, engineers, medical personnel, etc. these sets of professionals can mobilize their members to support peace initiation and equally involve in peacebuilding across the nation as they have member across the nation.

**5.8. Religious Bodies:** in Nigeria, the major religious affiliation of the citizens are – Christianity, Islam, and traditional religion. Although under each of the religions there are different sects. The religious leaders too are usually involved in peacebuilding in Nigeria. Their involvement could be physical when they preach peace to their followers; or when they are involved in the settlement of conflicts. Their involvement could also be spiritual when they ask to pray or propitiate for peace to reign.

**5.9. Traditional Institutions:** traditional institutions are also stakeholders in peacebuilding. The leaders of traditional institutions include – Oba, Emir, Sultan, Obi, and other titleholders who are spread all over the country. The institutions do involve in keeping peace in their domains, besides, conflict cases that are brought to the palaces are amicably settled by the Oba/Emir/Sultan/Obi, and other titleholders. The traditional institutions equally go all-out to maintain an atmosphere of peace.

Given the fact that peacebuilding is a complex task, all the stakeholders involved in peacebuilding must be up to the task of peacebuilding activities. For effective peacebuilding, people should come together and find a way of forging ahead in peace and its sustenance. In essence, peacebuilding always involves many sets of actors to achieve a successful peacebuilding process.

## **6. Peace Building versus Peace Education: Promoting the culture of peace**

The year 2000 was remarkable in the United Nations' quest for peacebuilding across the globe, as the year was declared by the UN General Assembly as 'the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. While it is a truism that peace is desirable to human-being, it is worthwhile to build an enduring one.

To build an enduring peace, it is imperative to institute peace education, where people are involved in knowledge and skills acquisition that will not only 'foster dialogue culture, but also 'encourage constructive skills to conflict resolution, nonviolent conflict resolution techniques' (Engdaw, 2013). This could be achieved through the proper enlightenment of citizens about their rights as well as respecting other citizens' rights.

Similarly, it is very essential that the 'culture of peace' is maintained in the state. One may then ask, what is the culture of peace? Culture of peace could be simply defined as:

*values, attitudes, and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice, and democracy, all human rights, tolerance, and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society (UNESCO, 2013).*

Thus, given the UN declaration, peace could be said to be revolving around the values of equality vis-à-vis access to information, with respect to authorities; to relationships between women and men. It is also about fraternity involving tolerance, solidarity among the people, as well as liberty, which has to do with cooperation and democracy (Fernández-Dols, Hurtado-de-Mendoza & Jiménez-de-Lucas, 2004).

The Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace earlier adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution 53/243 of 1999 emphasized eight action areas which include:

- Fostering a culture of peace through education;
- Promoting sustainable economic and social development;
- Promoting respect for all human rights;
- Ensuring equality between women and men;
- Fostering democratic participation;
- Advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity;
- Supporting participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge and;
- Promoting international peace and security.

## **7. Youth Neglect and Peacebuilding**

The UN, for statistical consistency and accuracy across the globe, sees 'youth, as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. In a similar vein, in the UN unanimous adoption of resolution 2250 of 2015, slightly increase the range of the years of people to be addressed as the youth. According to this agreement, youth are classified as persons aged 18 through 29. Youth constitute about 70% of Nigeria's population. And the Council advised Member States of the UN to put all machinery in motion in ensuring that youth are accommodated and involved in peace processes and dispute resolution.

The United Nations Secretary-General, Banki-Moon in 2015 while presenting the 'Plan of Action to prevent violent extremism' recognized the importance of youth in peacebuilding. Moon referred to youth as 'untapped resource' waiting for empowerment to offer their contributions toward nations' development. Youth constitute the majority of the world's population; given the fact that more than 600 million of them live in fragile and conflict-affected societies (UN, 2015), the United Nations has then drawn the attention of the world to the fact that youth are the most vulnerable to any conflict that occurs. This is because; youth are either affected as victims or as perpetrators of the violent conflicts in any part of the world. Thus if care is not taken, youth may continue to constitute a threat to global peace and security. In a similar vein, with the adoption of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2250 in December 2015, the importance of involving and engaging youth in peacebuilding was emphasized. It was realized that there is a connection among youth, peace, and security, and thereby, called for the inclusion of youth into institutions and mechanism for conflict prevention, resolution as well as for building sustainable peace.

However, the youth's involvement in conflict prevention and resolution has not been taken seriously in Nigeria as it is ought to be. All the levels of government are expected to be aware that youth needed to be taken seriously, especially in the areas of engaging them. This is necessary considering the consistent and persistent increase in the rate of youth unemployment. The failure of the government to engage and cater to the needs of her youth populations repeatedly threaten the nation's security as youth are readily available for recruitment into armed and insurgent groups. This could spell doom for peacebuilding and sustainable peace in Nigeria.

The effects of conflict could be so devastating in the lives of youth, for instance, in the event of ravaging wars or conflicts, youth are the most affected, as they are faced with injuries, having their academic activities affected, and being displaced forcefully from their homes. Besides, youth are enlisted into armed groups, prone to sexual abuse, and become orphans and even lose their lives. Thus, the adoption of resolution 2250 by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on December 9, 2015, was purposive to 'recognize the impact of conflicts on young people and how they can be included in the quest for sustainable peace'. Components of UNSCR 2250 are participation; protection; prevention; partnership and disengagement/reintegration.

### **7.1. Participation**

Member States are urged to find ways of increasing the number of youth representation in decision-making at all levels of government and administration, be it in local, national, regional, or international. They are equally urged to establish institutions and mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflict and to use these institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism.

### **7.2. Protection**

Parties to armed conflict are called upon to adhere strictly with the obligations applicable under international law, especially those that have to do with 'the protection of civilians, including those who are youth, including the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977.

### **7.3. Prevention**

Members States are urged 'to facilitate an inclusive and enabling environment in which youth actors, including youth from different backgrounds, are recognized and provided with adequate support to implement violence prevention activities and support social cohesion'.

### **7.4. Disarmament & Reintegration**

Disengagement and reintegration are another effort toward peacebuilding such that all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration should consider the

needs of youth affected by armed conflict. The needs for the youth include – involving youth in labour policies; youth employment opportunities, etc.

In Nigeria however, the resolution of UNSCR has not been followed as expected. For instance, President Muhammadu Buhari recently inaugurated a committee charged with the responsibility of finding a way of dealing with the incessant Fulani herdsmen and farmers ‘conflict, which usually claim the lives of people each time the conflict occurs. It was a surprise to discover that, no youth, irrespective of gender was in the committee. Similarly, regarding youth protection, the Nigerian government has always been found wanting, the recruitment of youth into different insurgent groups across the nation bore testimony to the Nigerian government’s deviation from UNSCR 2250 adoption. Not only that youth are being recruited into insurgent groups, the abduction of more than two hundred girls from Chibok Secondary School in Borno State, and the inability of the government to secure their release on time is disturbing and worrisome. It shows the incapability of the government to guarantee the safety of its youth.

## **8. Conclusion**

Peace is the greatest asset of man, and Nigeria as a nation has continued to have its fair share of challenges to peace, as the nation continues to encounter serious and various shattering conflict situations, spawned by incongruous fusion of multi-ethnic groups into one entity known as Nigeria. While Nigeria needs peace for national unity and integration; socio-economic as well as political development, ethnicity, struggle to control and Local Government autonomy, the nation’s resources, creation of Local Government Areas, land ownership issue, religious intolerance, and youth unemployment/restiveness amongst others have continued to militate against peacebuilding. In the end the study further concludes, that since peace and peacebuilding are essential ingredients for national cohesion and integration, socio-economic, as well as political development, ‘peace education and culture of peace’ must be maintained. All Actors of peacebuilding must stand-up to the task of curtailing all issues that can lead to a reoccurrence of conflict, while youth must be effectively engaged, allowed to participate in policy decision making of government, and involved actively in peacebuilding.

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